

The
Biology of Women
and
Other Animals

Ralph Lewin

AND

A. Friend

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When men are short of science, they stretch to Poetry.

—Charles Darwin

*... his poetry's made up of botany and wide margins and indecency in
about equal proportions.*

—James Branch Cabell

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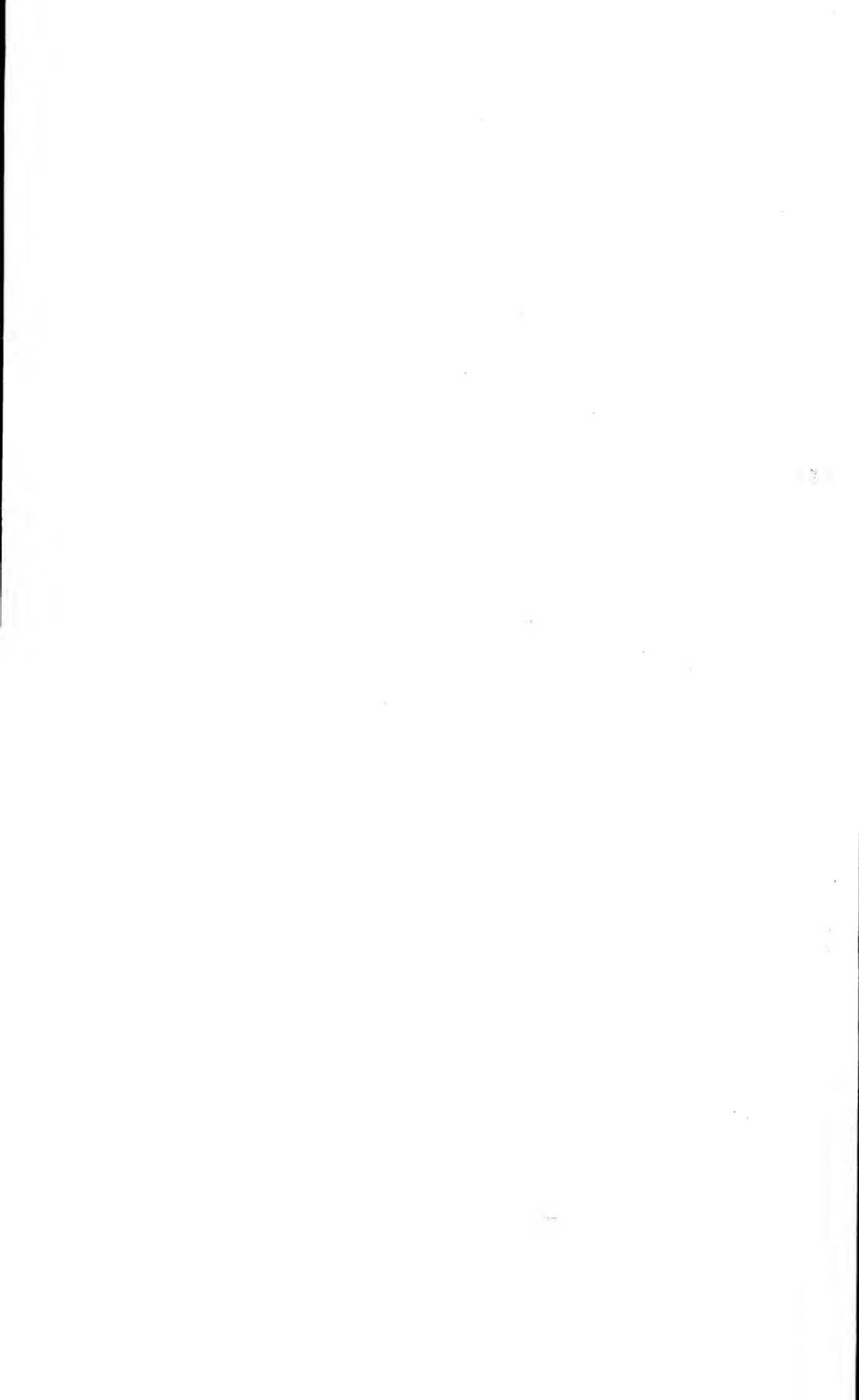
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Preface

WHEN we were discussing the publication of this little collection of verses, A. asked me "What about your wife? Won't she mind?" I said I thought not. "She's Chinese: she thinks in vertical lines. She doesn't go much for horizontal poetry like this." "How about all the others?" A. asked. "Some are imaginary, and the real ones have probably forgotten by now." "And the animals—what kind of animals?" "Men, mostly. But we couldn't call a book like this *The Biology of Man*; it would sound like an anthropology text, which this isn't. Maybe it's nearer to being an autobiography." A. agreed. "Make it two," she added. She ought to know ...

Ralph A. Lewin

Spring, 1983
La Jolla, California



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Teenagers' Choice

"A recent survey of teenagers in Africa shows that, given a free choice, almost half the boys would like to be birds and almost half the girls would like to be boys." Scientific American, April 1957, p. 14.

Skins gleamed as satin, black and gold,
Beside our forest blaze,
And braggart hunting tales were told
Of breathless hunting days.

We ate the little roasted quail
That, spitted dripping, turned;
And tale was piled on vaunted tale
As branch on branch was burned.

They came from far across the sea
To ask which we preferred -
Which creatures would we rather be?
Each lad replied, "A bird."

By river and by track they came
To ask each maiden coy.
Each giggling girl replied the same -
"A boy," she said, "A boy."

And so they learned a simple truth,
From dawn of Man to doom,
We all aspire, in surging youth,
To what we would consume.

I Can Make Rainbows

Song, composed for a Summer day, by a boy behind a bush.

I can make rainbows a yard or two high,
a yard or two high,
a yard or two high;

I can make arches reflecting the sky,
That gleam in the light of the sun...
But...

All **you** can make is puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground -
You girls!

I can make fountains that shine as they fall
With emeralds, diamonds, amber and all -
A glory of glistening fun...

But...

All **you** can make is puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground -
You girls!

I can take aim at a wandering fly
And hit at three paces, or make a good try,
Before you have even begun...

But...

All **you** can make is puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground -
You girls!

I can make music like whistling by,
Rustling leaves, or the wind in the rye.
Its impact is second to none...

But...

All **you** can make is puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground -
You girls!

I can do spirals upon a barn wall;
I can draw figures a yard or two tall,
Then zipp up, or button, and run...

But...

All **you** can make is puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground,
puddles on the ground -
You girls!

A Boy's Mind

I like to watch the girls at play
And think of super-sexy schemes.
I vary them from day to day;
So, in the night - wet dreams.

Along the beach, on sunny days,
A woman's supple walk, it seems,
Affects me in some subtle ways -
And then I get wet dreams.

When I am older - twenty say -
I'll cultivate those hidden streams.
I'll do some wetter things by day,
And sleep with drier dreams.

The Biology of Women

The biology of women is a science, not an art.
It is subject more to hormones than to
matters of the heart.
Though they tend to get a little animated
now and then,
The majority of women are less animal than men.

Other Animals

Other animals use their tails
As rudders, balancing poles or sails,
Extra legs (like the kangaroos)
Extra hands (like the monkeys' queues) -
Useful for flicking the flies off flanks,
Handy for cats (unless they're Manx).
Yet apes and people, without a doubt,
Manage to get along fine without.

Other animals eat and eat.
Some chew foliage, others meat;
Some suck oranges, others mice;
Some drink blood (like bats or lice).
Slugs eat lettuces; horses, hay;
And anteaters eat ants all day.
They don't have to cook their meals, like us,
But their diets are pretty monotonous.

Other animals, when they need
Fellow creatures with which to breed,
Wander about until they find
Animals of the opposite kind:
Finish the job with circumspection,
And wander off in another direction,
Missing - when everything's said and done -
A lot of the woe, but a lot of the fun.

Closely Watched Trains

This modest film, produced in Prague -
Unsullied by the "nouvelle vague" -
Recounts the story of a youth
In search of glory, love, and truth,
But hampered by a lowly station
And premature ejaculation.

The station-master feeds his doves
While his assistant lives and loves
And, landing an attractive slut,
He stamps approval on her butt.

Our boy is once or twice seduced
In waiting-room or pigeon roost
By willing ladies - mostly Czechs -
Who share his need for instant sex.

At last, to prove himself a man,
He signs up as a partisan
And, in the last dramatic scenes,
He blows himself to smithereens.

His exit is, in modern trend,
A premature, exploded end.

Rendezvous

(This is to a lady
Whom I've never met.)

Do you laugh at sorrow?
Do you weep at fools?
Will you break, tomorrow,
All the silly rules?
Will you, smiling sweetly,
Kick away your shoes -
Or will you, discreetly,
Modestly refuse?

(Where the woods are shady,
When the sun has set,
There awaits a lady
Whom I've never met -
Yet.)

Telephone Numbers

Sylvia has the softest hair;
Phyllis's is darker now;
Ellen has grown very fair -
I wonder how?

Sylvia's lips were cool and wet;
Phyllis's were warm and dry;
Ellen's kiss was warmer yet -
I wonder why?

Sylvia now has other men;
Phyllis is no longer there;
Ellen must have moved again -
I wonder where?

Though my days were gay and bright
I have little left to choose.
I must go to bed tonight -
I wonder whose?

It's An Ill Blade That Cuts No Ice

(a libertine's lament)

I'm on the fast-and-loose again;

I'm ripe for an affair.

I'm not particular with whom;

It doesn't matter where.

This marital fidelity

Is getting quite a bore.

I used to have some scruples, but

I haven't any more.

And yet, although a lot of dames

To whom I'm introduced

May look at me seductively,

I've never been seduced.

I'm full of promiscuity;

I've dalliance to burn;

But pretty little obstacles

Arise at every turn.

I try to compromise a date,

But always find I can't;

She's had an operation, or

Is staying with an aunt.

A circumstance propitious tends

To turn into a joke

When they come to fix the telephone

Or Baby starts to choke.

Some day I shall be shipwrecked on

A distant desert isle,

Where all the men are off at sea

And all the maidens smile.

But when I've made acquaintance with

A pretty, willing friend,

Then some damn ship'll rescue me -

And that'll be the end!

As The Lock Is...

These lyrics, signed "R.D.", were probably written by Sir Rolfe Dunstable (ca. 1810-1841), who wrote songs and ballads in the Home Counties during the reign of George IV. As the lock is was printed privately, and was sold in penny sheets at the Great Aylesbury County Fair of 1838. It was undoubtedly sung; but unfortunately the tune was not recorded. It was probably a simple melody, with frequent repetitions in the manner fashionable at that time.

As the lock is to the key -
As the apple to the pie -
As the forest to the tree -
So my life embraces Di-
ana.

She is fair and fancy-free;
She is modest (yet not shy);
She is born to melody;
She is angel; she is Di-
ana.

Turns the sail to wind or lee;
Flies the pennant low or high;
She and I shall aye agree,
She with me, and I with Di-
ana.

When the fishes leave the sea;
When the birds forsake the sky;
When the English give up tea -
Then I might abandon Di-
ana.

But, as far as eye can see,
And as long as swallows fly,
She shall ever be for me
My beloved and my Di-
ana.

Pollination needs the bee
(Better yet, the butterfly);
So have I a need of thee,
Loveliest and sweetest Di-
ana.

Let me now thy leman be;
Let me love (or let me try)
Ever true, devotedly -
Ever constant to my Di-
ana.

Between

She was no woman fully grown,
Nor maid of seventeen;
Her age was something all her own
And somewhere in between.

She came to dine by candle-light
In purple velveteen.
It was not day, nor dusky night,
But somewhere in between.

“Should we take supper first, my sweet,
Or afterwards, my queen?”
She answered, with a smile discrete,
“I’d rather, in between.”

I loved her when she came to rest
On sheets of damascene;
I loved her ankles, and her breast,
And somewhere in between.

She was not quite the first I knew,
Nor yet the last, I ween;
But she was sweet, and kind, and true -
I loved her, in between.

Lament

My Naomi has gone to Switzerland,
and left me here.

My heart is shattered into bits
beyond repair, I fear.

The gloomy incubus, that sits
upon my hollow chest,
Discourses endlessly of Switzerland
in bitter jest.

The mountains, I suppose, are nice:
the Alps occur in Switzerland,
along with edelweiss,
and cheese, and climbing kits.

She may have launched an avalanche,
or slipped in a crevasse;

She may be sipping crème-de-manche
out of a demitasse;

She may be living in a Ritz,
and dining in, or out -

But all I know of her and Switzerland
is full of doubt.

My love has gone among the snows
and left me on the sand.

I wonder why a lady goes
alone to Switzerland?

To N.

How can I call my lady fair
When she has raven hair?
I think she is surpassing wise
With kind and laughing eyes -
And yet her laughter makes me weep:
She laughs alone at me;
Her humour is profoundly deep
For all but me to see.

(I wish I were a cyclotron
Behind a leaden door
And she were there, to shine upon
From midnight until four.
I wish I were a coliform
And she a perfect phage
Inscribing message, kind and warm,
As on a scented page.)

How can I think of her as fair
While pondering alone
Devoted here, while she is there
Where sands of time have blown?
Oblivious of my despair
And occupied her tone -
Can such a lady fail to care
Beside her telephone?

Run, Run Actaeon

I think I have found the lyrics of the madrigal you asked about. It comes from a collection entitled "Ayres for Still Knights," by Ralph Dunstable—possibly a descendant of John of Dunstable, who lived in that town about 130 years before. There is a copy in the Bodleian, and another in the British Museum; the latter bears a manuscript date 28-4-1508. The Bodleian version follows:

Run, run Actaeon, to thy wooded laire;
Her baying pack may seek thee even there,
Whyle I am gladde, this greene and happie spryng,
Again to here the Triple-goddess syng.

Fly, fly, Actaeon - to thy coverts fly;
For I have supped with her whom thou didst spye
When shee did set asyde her willoe-bow
To dyne with simpell mortels here below.

Speede thy swift hooves, Actaeon; quickly flee;
For, cladde in but a smyle, she smyled on me,
And, in a warm and close-embracing presse
She sighed so sweetly with a whispered yes.*

*The B. M. version differs slightly; the writing is unclear and the vellum faded, but this last word looks like "guess".

That Old, Old Mask

A complement to Dorothy Parker

Listen, brother: never tell
Of the bitter calomel;
Of the dolour and the doubt
Midnight in and midnight out.
If you'd woo, and wish to win,
Do it with a cheery grin;
Never let your lady know
Of your worry and your woe.
If you learn of other men
Visiting her late again,
Let a little cynic smile
Play upon your face awhile.
If her fancies tend to stray,
Laugh the other lads away;
Never let your lady see
Tears of patent misery.
She will never drop her fan
For a melancholy man.

When she ultimately goes
Tripping off on fickle toes -
Sorry, brother. Chin up, man!
Keep on grinning - if you can.

Drink to me not only ...

“I’ll be alone tonight,” she said;
So I came to conquer and to seduce.
I stayed for bantering words instead,
And all that she gave me was orange-juice.

Stalling for time, she read and read
Letters from one whose pen profuse
Sullied the sheets of a papery bed
With turgid prose in a style abstruse.

In spirits crushed, and with ardour dead,
Sad is the lot of a lone recluse.
Where is the butter to balm my bread?
What have I now to live for, Zeus?

Bitter the bachelor tears I shed.
Dear Dionysus, what’s the use?
I long for the nectar of lips so red,
And all that I get is orange-juice.

The Cure

"It's good for the fevers," my grandmother said,
"Or pains in the back, or an ache in the head.
A cure for afflictions of every degree
Is a dose of hot cider-and-sassafras tea."

My hands were a-tremble, my eyes were aflame;
My feet were of lead, and my heart was the same.
I thought about drowning my sorrows at sea,
But I settled for cider-and-sassafras tea.

And now the decoctions have deadened the pain,
I bear the dull burdens of living again;
But come back, my dear, so that I may be free
From a lifelong addiction to sassafras tea.

'Tis better to have loved and lost
than never to have lost at all.

With apologies to Alexander Pope

With portals shut, and every casement closed;
With all her importunities exposed,
She lay alone, to contemplate the cost
Of virtues gambled, and of matches lost.
'Twere better, have they but reversed the bet,
To start with love, and finish with a set.

Hymn for Canticles on an Organ

(Reformation Sunday)

We came to church upon this day
To join the other sinners,
Arising from our bed, as they
Arose from Sunday dinners.

Between the arches, high above,
We set the rafters ringing.
We sing of happiness and love,
And know of what we're singing.

O, angels we have heard on high
In vast, eternal chorus;
But I have known an angel nigh
Not half an hour before us.

(And I have laid an angel low
Who strove not to avoid it.
She yielded willingly, and so
I hope that she enjoyed it.)

To Lucile

The flowers that colour the fields in the spring
Have trumpets unsounding and bells without ring.
Their petals are silently spangled with dew
When the clouds in the heavens are silver and blue.

The birds of the ocean are light as the air;
They soar without compass, their souls without care,
While waves weave a pattern eternally new
And the wind on the water is silver and blue.

There are maidens as dark and a pleasant of face,
With eyes lit with laughter and hands full of grace;
But the kindest of all, and the fairest to view,
Is my love and my lady in silver and blue.

The Third Kiss

I kissed her first, in tortured bliss.
She cried in fury and disgrace.
When next I tried to steal a kiss,
She vowed that she would slap my face.
Yet later, when I kissed her cheek,
She neither wept, nor aimed a blow.
But smiled.
And then my knees grew weak:
Such smiles are stronger than we know.

Design

I cannot tell the colour of her hair.
Her face is smooth, and freckled with the sun.
Her eyes are blue, or brown, or greeny-grey,
And wrinkled with a twinkling of fun.

She has a love for country and the sea,
For quite things, and wandering apart.
Her attitude is wise with commonsense,
With constant humour, and a kindly heart.

Her home and station may be as my own,
And we can think along a common way.
Her voice is soft, and, with a Scottish lilt,
She weaves a little song throughout the day.

Her face is fair; her form is trimly set.
She loves me - but I have not found her, yet.

Cafeteria

The fairest maid in all the land
Came here to dine today.
She gazed around, as in her hand
She bore a laden tray.
I sat alone. When she came by,
My brow grew moist, my throat went dry.
She saw me with unseeing eye,
And slowly walked away.

Grey Friday

This morning held no prospect
For the day.

The sea was lead;
The very air was grey.
The sorry minutes
Mutely ticked away.

The hours dragged by
In vigil just begun.
Came noon, and there was waiting
After one.

Grey clouds arose
And hid the sun from view.
The fog-horn moaned,
And no-one came at two.

It started raining
Shortly after three.
Alone, I had no appetite
For tea.

The day just drawled,
And five came none too soon.
Nobody laughed
In all the afternoon.

The people passed
Along the corridor,
But there was none to banter with
At four.

As dingy dusk recedes
To night unknown,
Chilled to the core,
By winds unkindly blown,
Cheerless and sad,
I cycle home alone.

Love And A Night To Sing

After an afternoon
Spent, like a hundred days,
Dodging each other's gaze,
Met, by a fallen log
Under a leaning pine
Close to the water-line.

Only a single frog
Calls from across the lake,
Keeping his love awake.

Only a waning moon
Glistens among the trees
Into our ecstasies.

Flitting above the fen,
Fireflies flash and fade
Into the everglade.
Leaves have bedecked her hair,
Fallen, as soft as night,
Over her shoulders white.

Now we have time to spare,
Love, and a night to sing -
Now we have everything.

Far from the lamps of men
Sleeping below the hill,
Lagamore Lake is still.

Au Revoir

I was so casual, so gay.
I waved an airy, leaden hand,
And heard my voice, so far away,
In tones I did not understand -
Some empty phrase - what did I say?

I tried in vain to clear my throat.
I forced a smile to mask my gloom,
While watery scenes began to float
In shapeless streams about the room.
I turned, and buttoned up my coat.

I had no will. I could not stay -
She was so casual, so gay.

Promenade

There were silver and green
In the summer dusk sky,
And a rippling sheen
On the sea of young rye -
Yet a sea without land
Or the bitter of brine,
But with farm close at hand
And the sweet smell of pine.

Did this compass the whole
Of my drunken delight,
Or the body and soul
Who were with me that night?

There were silver and green
In the gleam of her eyes
That glittered the meaning
Of peace and surprise.
There was gold in the band
Of her hair, fairy-fine,
And the pulse in her hand
Beat a rhythm with mine.

My leaping heart soared
Full of love and delight.
Was it she I adored,
Or the beauty of night?

So Little Time

**We had so little time to walk,
So little time to speak,
When all the loving of a life
Was packed into a week.**

**So little time to row a boat,
So little in a bus.**

**We loved the world of humankind -
But mostly, we loved us.**

**So little time along the roads,
So little by the sea.**

**The world was full of things to love,
But mostly, you loved me -**

**And I loved mostly you, my love,
For you are sweet and fair -
So fair and sweet, when lovers meet,
'Tis all that love can bear.**

**We had so little time to sing,
So little to explain.**

**We had a week for loving once,
Again, and yet again.**

We ate or drank at times, maybe;
We slept a little, true;
But mostly, lips were met in love,
And limbs and bodies, too.

Then we were young, and we were old,
And we were wild, and meek,
And good and bad, and hot and cold -
And all within a week.

We spent it in each other's arms,
And we were quick, and still;
For you and I agreed to lie
And love by common will.

And we were quick, and we were slow,
And we were moist, and dry,
With little time to say Hello -
And less to say Goodbye.

You came; we loved; and you have gone,
And left a hollow pain;
And life and I plod on, plod on,
Alone, alone again.

Sonnet: To A Maid

My hair's dishevelled - aye, but so's my heart.
My clothes disordered - and my inmost soul.
My tortured spirit permeates my whole.
My mind directs, my being plays the part.

Kitten, that tangles life's once-tidy skein -
Tempest, that tears the spume from settled seas -
Fire, that inflames the hearts of solemn trees,
And licks the grasses of the peaceful plain -

Love has awakened love within my breast.
Passion has torn my plans to flakes of snow.
Anguish has ploughed the paths on which I go,
Stumbling and blind - nor yet a sign of rest.

Beauty, have pity! Pitying, grant a sign!
Sweet, for the love of love - will you be mine?

Sonnet: Red Ribbon

Bare of design, and of all import free,
Simply I sent a trace of ribbon, red
As Anagallis in her humble bed
Or poppy petals in their brilliancy.

Nought was implied. That self-same band enclosed
Was one that I, while idly looking round
In my apartment at the inn had found.
Forgotten, it upon a shelf reposed.

Now it returns, transformed by subtle art -
Who knows how many hours may have been spent
With nimble fingers, and with shoulder bent? -
Exalted to the outline of a heart.

What dainty frills can come, what pleasing shape,
From simple substance, even from red tape!

Handle With Care

“Fragile. Please do not touch,” she said.
I bent my nature, and complied,
Though senses seething in my head
Rebelled inside.

“Leave me,” she begged, “in solitude.”
I drew away, and tried to keep
My ardent tendencies subdued
In troubled sleep.

But seven single days are much
Too long for quarantine like this.
Contagion beckons in the touch
She would dismiss.

She is not marble set with gold,
Nor I a lump of baser stone.
How can I act unfeeling, cold,
And stay alone?

Her very being is too near,
Too close in presence to resist.
She should be held so softly here,
And lightly kissed ...

The Visitor

Why did she come to call on me
In busyness and haste,
With matters to be settled, and
With people looking on?
The happiness was fleeting, and
The confidence misplaced;
The afternoon was hurried
And was gone.

This was no visitor with gay
Affectionate intent.
She did not banter with a laugh
Familiar in tone;
But in the dark I somehow felt
She smiled before she went,
And I was left to wondering
Alone.

She was no simple guest, that one
Could lightly understand.
She had not sought companionship
As other people had;
But, pausing briefly at the door,
She lightly pressed my hand,
And I was left disconsolate
And sad.

Night, Kindly Night

Night, kindly night, has drawn her sombre veil
Across the summer sky.
Darkness reflects itself within the depths
Of never-sleeping seas;
And here beside me, two engaging eyes
Are limitlessly deep and black.

The moon is full. Her noble, shining orb
Relieves the vaulted darkness of the sky.
Each surging wave, advancing on the shore,
Illuminates with magic in her crest.
Can I detect some gleams, reflected lights,
That sparkle even in her eyes at night?

Out of the sky, the sighing of warm breezes
Rustles among the mast-heads and the lines.
The restless seas, below,
Whisper their answers from the breaking waves;
And - softly, sweetly, in a foreign tongue -
She tells me of a mystery in song.

The cables, barely visible, vibrate,
Stirred by the lightest of soft summer winds.
The ripples of the sea must indicate
Some deeper movement of the unseen tides.
The night is warm; I have no fever - yet
My fingers seem to tremble in the night.

The Mute

Her hair is mustard-honey gold;
Her eyes, spring-morning blue;
Her body young - as mine is old -
 Supple and soft and new.
She ran to hug me yesterday,
 So lissome and so light,
And kissed my cheek, as if to say
 The world was good and right -
But we could only kiss, and touch,
 And bill and coo like birds
That love each other very much
 And have no need for words.
Yet inwardly, I sighed and prayed
 And gently backed away;
My sorrow for that muted maid
 Was more than I could say.
I simply could not understand
 What cruel god had done
To grant this queen of bitterland
 All qualities - but one.

Soliloquy

Why did she grant him more than me?
I have a keener wit than he.
My love's as great as his, or more;
Yet I was sternly shown the door.

I came, as he had come before.
I pleaded, till I feared to bore -
Yet failed. 'Tis sad indeed to be
Rejected ignominiously.

Higher, by far, is my degree,
And higher, too, my courtesy.
I strove to understand her views
And bade, at midnight, my adieu.

Like Robert Bruce, he did not lose
His patience. With this simple ruse,
He had the gall; he had the key;
And - most of all - he stayed till three.

The Surrogate

When darkness shrouds our double bed,
Then I can spare a brief caress
To shadows in my loneliness,
And shut my eyes with tears unshed.
I press my kisses in her hair,
But leave her lips of favours free
And so sustain my fantasy -
You bade me not to kiss you there.

Christmas Memories

What can you see in the fire, Kate -
In the leaping flames?

Gorse in the gold of sundown,
Or childish games?

What are the scenes that flicker
In the glowing coals?

Cliffs in the little islands,
With smugglers' holes?

What can you see in the window
On the frosted pane?

Palms in a sea-girt garden,
Or a ferny lane?

Patterning strands of seaweed
Where the sea-gulls go?

What can you see on the glass, Kate,
Beyond ice and snow?

As you sit in the Christmas homestead
By a cheery grate,

Winds ruffle the wastes of water -
Can you hear them, Kate?

Do you hear the refrains of summer
As the embers fade?

Fire and stone, wind and water,
Are of what we're made.

A Car Parked At Dusk

Dream, if you would, of dignity;
 But by this polished pool
Where boughs reach down to rippled tree
 We are too young to cool.
Along the human thoroughfare
 Mad nature at the wheel
Accelerates the pulses, where
 The appetites appeal.

Preach, if you would, propriety
 By dead and desert sand;
But where the air is fresh and free
 The trees go hand in hand.
The sky is mirrored in the reeds
 And nature flushes green.
We share their fundamental needs,
 But have no glass between.

Urge, if you would, urbanity;
 But cloudy curtains fall
And, by degree and slow degree,
 The night envelopes all.
The taste of bruise will linger on
 The tenderness of lips
When we to single beds have gone
 To rest our aching hips.

Second Cycle

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give furbelows a-plenty
But not your heart away."

My life has been a slow one
With neither rose nor rue.
I gave my heart to no-one -
And now I'm forty-two.

Cold Comfort

My Jane is vegetable, ash, or clay.
She sleeps as soundly as she toils by day,
Intolerant of improprieties
In proper dress to well below her knees.
Her love is theory, untouched by lust;
She sleeps the sleep of angels, and of dust.
Nothing impure is done, and nothing said;
Though quick with life, she is as cold as dead.

So I must fashion partners out of air;
Embracing arms from here, and thighs from there;
Hot lips from that one, gentle hands from this,
And rounded breasts, responsive to a kiss.
With all my wishful dreams and fancies stark,
I nurse my urges in the healing dark.
Cooling the normal ardours of my life,
I sleep alone, beside my lawful wife.

Two's Company Couplets

Winter

What joy it is to curl at rest
Against a soft and satin breast;
To drowse, in cozy peace of mind,
With arms embraced and legs entwined;
To share a shelter, close and warm,
Against the wailing winter storm,
And, under blankets wide and deep,
To sink into profoundest sleep -

But no; I have to hear alone
The tempest and the telephone,
Shivering in my dressing-gown -
My love, alas, is out of town.

Summer

How pleasant to relax my feet
In cooler corners of the sheet;
To lie, akimbo or astride,
Upon my back or on my side,
With limbs extended far and free,
And doze in peace, all dreamlessly -

But no; I have to shrink instead
Along the margin of the bed,
With scarce a narrow inch to spare
Beside the precipice, and share
My **Lebensraum** - my room for life -
Beside a hot and sweaty wife.

Reunion

Absence makes the heart grow fonder -

Not so time, alas;

Faith and troth begin to wander

As the seasons pass.

Cups that brimmed within the hour,

Whether soon or late,

Unreplenished, tend to sour

Or evaporate.

Once, we used to talk together

Into kingdom come;

Now the vagaries of weather

Leave the moment dumb.

Though our meeting passes gaily,

Tolerably well,

When we lived together daily

We had more to tell.

When you left me, traveller,

We were knit as one;

Time, that old unraveller,

Barely had begun.

Sands, that trickle as you wander,

Drain from glass to glass;

Absence makes the heart grow fonder -

Not so time, alas.

Variations On A Theme

1. Ambitions Of Youth

A loaf of bread,
A stoup of wine,
A thousand bucks -
And thou;
A humble lot,
A cosy cot,
Were happiness
Enow.
But Nature's true
Philosopher
Could be content
With less.
The grand, the date,
The real estate,
Would do for me,
I guess.

2. To My Wife

A loaf of bread,
A stoup of wine,
And thou,
I sometimes think,
Were happiness
Enow.
(But when the going gets a trifle tough,
The bread and wine, I feel, would be enough.)

Modus Vivendi

I fear that I may never find
A perfect pearl of womankind.

My present wife is pretty fair;
We make a tolerable pair.
She has her faults; but who are we
To criticize humanity?

Some charming girls have come in view,
But if I make a pass or two
My wife creates a tearful scene;
So I'm resigned to might-have-been,
Consoled with thoughts that they, perhaps,
Might make a scene for other chaps.

I think whatever thoughts I choose,
And when we hold opposing views
I find it generally best
To leave mine wholly unexpressed.

With marital reserve and tact,
I don't discuss this sober fact:
The chances are, I'll never find
A perfect pearl of womankind.

The Deluded Wanderer

I was a happy wanderer;
I led a life of ease,
For I could roam
Or stay at home
Exactly as I please.

Tra-la-lee, tra-la-la,
With a knapsack on my back.

I was a simple squanderer
Without a single care.
I turned my head
Where fancy led,
And wandered everywhere.

I'm now a bonded wanderer,
No longer fancy-free,
But firmly tied
To woman's side
For grim eternity.

Tra-la-lee, tra-la-la,
With a millstone round my neck.

I am a married wanderer,
And life is full of care.
I've grown to hate
The bonded state
Of duty and despair.

But minds are free for wandering

To stir the souls of men.

It's not too late

To change my fate

To wandering again.

Tra-la-lee, tra-la-la,

With a knapsack on my back.

For Whom The Bell Tolls

I shed a button from my shirt

Into the grey, eternal dirt.

My pen is leaking at the joint

And bits of fluff infest its point;

The ink has spattered on my tie,

And I've got something in my eye.

There goes the phone's emphatic gong -

The number's certain to be wrong.

This must be my unlucky day.

(They merely telephoned to say

My wife had had the rotten luck

To be run over by a truck

While crossing Broadway on the bias.)

O, well -

These little things are sent to try us.

Old Flame

The cheek has lost some of its bloom, my dear;
The smile is a trifle less gay.

Little patterns of lines
Have appeared, as the signs
Of an August succeeding a May.

Your laugh is no longer a bell, my love;
Your voice has a catch in its tone.

Your expression, my dear,
Has become more austere -
(Even so, I suppose, has my own.)

Your step is less light than it was, my dear;
Your waist is no longer as slim.

Slender ankles and arms
Have lost some of the charms
That I sought in each maidenly limb.

Those eyes are no longer as clear, my love;
Those lips are a whit less divine.

Your figure, in truth,
Is not lissome with youth -
(But no more, I imagine, is mine.)

The temples have started to grey, my dear;
The teeth are not pearls any more.

The complexion sublime
Has been mellowed with time
And as life has recorded the score.

My passions for you may have waned, my love,
Diminished by shade or degree.

They are hard to detect -
(But then so, I suspect,
Are your vanishing passions for me.)

Eheu, Fugaces!

(On noting a white hair where I least expected to see one)

My temper isn't getting any longer;
My rock of ages softens into clay;
My penetrating insight is no stronger -
And now, my pubic hair is going gray!

I still sow oats, when happenstances beckon;
I sometimes gather rosebuds, while I may.
But now my loves are limited, I reckon;
My pubic hair has started to go gray.

I can't sustain my adolescent power;
I cannot hold the sands of time at bay.
I contemplate my manhood in the shower,
And note my pubic hair is growing gray.

I rarely get erections in the morning;
I almost never have them in the day.
My spirits tend to flag with little warning -
And now, my pubic hair is going gray.

Libations pour in vain to Aphrodite!
'Neath Autumn suns I make my final hay.
Old Chronos humbles me among the mighty -
Alas! My pubic hair is going gray.

Triangles

I kiss but two in present life:
A certain lady, and my wife.
The one in duty, morn and night;
The other for my own delight.

As I embrace my loving spouse
She ponders problems of the house:
The petty bills we have to pay;
The garbage - will they call today?

The lady, too, I chanced to find,
Has other matters on her mind.
She has a distant lover, who
Is not particularly true.

And thus my kisses, here and there,
Evaporate in empty air.
Confound the man! - and her! - and you!
The Devil take the garbage, too.

Ode - To Peebie

(Attributable, without any justification whatsoever, to Robert Burns, who might have heard his telephone operator announce "PBX-we do not dial" if he had lived in this century.)

I ne'er have met you in the street;
I ne'er have seen you smile.
I only know, if we should meet,
That you would never dial.

I dinna ken your age or race;
I can but guess your sex;
But, though I ne'er have seen your face,
I love you, Peebie Ecks.

And, be there storm or be it fine -
Whatever be the weather -
If you and I could hold the line,
They we might speak together.

God keep you free from all alarm,
From trouble and from guile,
From lines that cross to mortal harm,
And them that never dial.

O, keep you safe, on land and sea,
From tempests and from wrecks;
I wish you safely home with me,
My darling Peebie Ecks.

One Thousand And One Nights

Cypriot nights are warm and dark;
Late and dark was our tryst that night.
An angel came to me out of the sky -
Out of the heavens so black, so high -
In a foreign land,
A familiar face,
With a wave of the hand
To a warm embrace -
For the time and the place were right.

Israel nights are warm and still;
We went to the end of the line that night.
In Jaffa ruins beside the shore,
We sat by the surf of a sea once more.
I sifted the sand
With my finger-tips.
I felt for her hand
And I kissed her lips -
And she clung to me, long and tight.

In Athens the dusk was warm and soft;
The Aegean moon was full that night.
We dined on olives, and grapes, and cheese,
With a cup of wine by the wine-dark seas.
The bread was fresh
And the melon, sweet;
Small waves were splashing
Around our feet -
And her eyes were agleam and bright.

Viennese nights are filled with song:
A musical feast we had that night.
Festival boards in a final fling
Where dinner companions were pleased to sing.
A late repast
In the hills above,
Marking the last
Of our nights of love -
Till the time shall again be right.

The Burial of Mrs. Bradford in El Cajon (After Wolff)

Not a horn was heard, not a funeral note
As her corse to the corner we hurried.
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our Maggie we buried.

We laid her discreetly at dead of night -
What sods we were slowly turning -
By the straggling moonbeam's misty light
And the headlights dimly burning.

No useless sheeting enclosed her form,
Not in sombre shroud or coffin,
But she lay like a madam, no longer warm;
We had laid her one time too often.

Few and short were the things we said
In expressions of oath and sorrow,
As we peered through the gloom at the broad that was dead
And we thought of the empty tomorrow.

A vacant lot was her final bed,
With a tyre for her lonely pillow,
For we feared that a stranger would tread on her head,
And we on the lam or the billow.

Lightly they'll talk of the loving that's gone
And o'er her chill body upbraid her,
But little she'll reck, if they let her sleep on
Where three of us fellows have laid her.

We left her cooling under the stars
Where nobody nigh had seen us.
She had perished not on the fields of Mars
But in action on fields of Venus.

Swiftly but sadly we stole away
From the field of her fame, flesh and gory.
She had died like a heroine, felled in the fray,
And we left her alone with her glory.

One Arabian Night

**Beside a muttering camel lies
The camel-boy, a paradigm
Of poverty beneath the skies,
Upon the shifting sands of time.**

**Beside a guttering candle lies
The elderly, exhausted sage,
Who suffered unannounced demise
Upon his semi-written page.**

**Beside a tottering chancel lies
The chancellor, whose noble name
Betokens guile in any guise,
And, next to him, some naughty dame.**

**The sage is dead. The camel-boy
Sleeps still upon the desert floor;
While, clad in night, a maid of joy
Is balling with the chancellor.**

The Candidates

Similar in all degrees -
Age, and height, and shape -
Half a dozen human peas
Pose in azure crepe.
All are evenly displayed
Duplicates in grace,
Painted to a common shade
On a china face.
Innocent of character,
Innocent of guile,
Each soliciting with her
Deadly, decal smile.
Half a dozen pairs of eyes
Scintillate as one.
Matched in feature, form and size -
Uniformly done -
These are puppets on a shelf,
Modelled in a press.
Pick a winner? For myself,
I could care no less.

The Maid of Branksome Dene

There was a maid in Branksome Dene,
A maid in name politely,
Who faced the day with smile serene
And earned her living nightly.

O, gay the lanes of Cavalcade,
Where Virtue vies with Queen,
Where bets are laid, and ladies made,
In merry Branksome Dene.

She'd ruby lips and ample hips,
And chestnut eyes agleaming.
Her waist was slim, her ankles trim,
Her heart was full of scheming.

O, gay the lanes ...

A captain came from Plymouth Town,
With swinging blade and swagger.
He wore a hat as wide as that,
And girt a hasty dagger.

O, gay the lanes ...

A-strolling down the Cavalcade,
His black moustaches twirling,
His eyes he laid upon the maid,
And sware he'd go agirling.

O, gay the lanes ...

“Good sir, I harken to your call”

The maid replied demurely.

“Your eyes are proud, your shoulders tall,

And you’re a captain, surely.”

O, gay the lanes ...

“Come hither, maid, and take my hand,

And thou shalt take none other;

And we’ll go lilting through the land

And face black night together.”

O, gay the lanes ...

“O, come with me and be my bride;

Thy bonds of Branksome sever.

And we’ll to Plymouth Township ride,

And dwell therein for ever.”

O, gay the lanes ...

“But must I cook to your demands?”

The maid inquired discreetly,

“For pots and pans will rough my hands,

And spoil my looks completely.”

O, gay the lanes ...

“But must I scour, and wash, and sew?”

The maiden asked politely,

“Then would the fire of life burn low,
And be exhausted nightly.”

O, gay the lanes ...

“O, thou shalt live a lady’s life”

Replied the captain dandy.

“For I’ve a true and trusted wife
To keep the household handy.”

O, gay the lanes ...

“Then I’ll away to Plymouth free”

So laughed the maid delighted,

“And we’ll be three in harmony,
To triple concord plighted.”

O, gay the lanes ...

She left the lanes of Cavalcade,

And, ‘came the captain’s queen;

To draw the shades on other maids
In merry,

merry,

merry

Branksome Dene.

Contemplation

What's in a sack?
Beans? Coal?
Potato chips?
A torso, whole
With hips,
And breast, and back?
The little, private camouflage of Eves -
(Black panties, or fig leaves?)
A lonely navel, and
A throbbing womb -
(A house full, or an empty room?)
All warm and pink -
Eh, Jack?
It makes you think,
A sack.

The Smiths

Beneath a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands.
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With broad and sinewy hands.

Beneath a neigh'ring chestnut tree
The smithy's mistress sits.
Good Mrs. Smith is matronly,
With broad and billowing tits.

Between the pair of chestnut trees
Stand fourteen little stools,
For smiths forge mighty families
With stout and sinewy tools.

Scope

The homo and the hetero
Were walking hand in hand;
They wept like anything to see
Alliances unplanned.
"If people could be organized"
(They said) "It would be grand."

"The homos should be penalized"
The hetero inveighed.
"When man concerns himself with man
They leave but maid with maid -
And that way lies sterility
(To call a spade a spade)."
"But let us have our liberty"
The homo made reply.
"There is another shore, you know,
Beneath another sky.
Let each explore for happiness -
(Or give us leave to try)."

And then another voice was heard
With yet another plea:
"Then why not try to be a bi,
And do the same as we
With not just him or her, but both
In true equality?"
"You cannot claim that you have loved
If you have only tried
To savour life's forbidden fruits
On one restricted side."
The homo nudged the hetero,
But neither one replied.
Till someone said "Diversity
Is cause for no alarm.
A taste for life's variety
Can lead to little harm,
And girls' and boys' bucolic joys
Are richest on the farm."

Dandeline Joe

I am a market gardener;
I've got the knack of growing
The finest crops of turnip-tops,
The biggest marrows going.

For I've a way with oats and hay,
And I can reap and sow.
I cull the weeds and set the seeds,
And they call me Dandeline Joe.

My crops of beet are quite a treat,
Likewise my peas and clover.
My brussels sprouts come bursting out
Before the summer's over.

For I've a way with oats and hay, ...

My thumbs are green, they say; but as
I've fourteen kids to care of,
There's bits unseen that's just as green
As any you're aware of.

For I've a way with oats and hay, ...

To An Unsuspecting Lady

There shone her pillow'd, golden hair;
One satin arm and shoulder bare

To match the whiteness of the sheet.
There quilted hillocks marked her feet
And rounded contours of her hips.

Her breasts so gently rose and fell
As softest breathing passed her lips -

Those tempters I have known so well.
I longed to rest among those hills

Beside that dear, harmonious sea -
Beside the tide, that slowly stills

The waves to sweet serenity,
And let those rippled yellow sands
Run lightly through my hungry hands.

Why did I not lie close, to share
The silky fragrance of her hair,
Indulging in that warming sun
Now dusk had set, and day was done?

She lay there, sleeping peacefully:
And so? - and so, alas, did he.

A Dip Into Anatomy

There is a zone, where neck and shoulder meet,
Where skin is velvet-soft and fragrant-sweet.

I part the golden tress below her ear
And, on the yielding flesh, my hungry lips
Implant my kisses - deep, devout, sincere -
Beside the subtle bands of silken slips.

Here could I spend an age - although, I own,
My sighs are bridled by her collar-bone.

A Middle-Aged Professor's Plea

'Midst college youths, I often fail
To tell the female from the male.
(With stringy hair and dirty jeans,
They tend to look like in-betweens.)
Since Mother Nature, nonetheless,
Provided clues to help us guess -
If, modern youths, you'd have me know -
Streak on ... streak often ... but streak slow!

Diversity

Some sway gently in the wind;
Some are firm and round;
Some are lightly underpinned,
Or more securely bound.

Some are conical, or fat,
Or pendulous, like cows' -

“You men are all the same” said Pat,
Rebuttoning her blouse.

The Dance At Port Moresby*

Maidens jiggle, matrons bounce and older ladies
swing

Up and down the magic rows and round the magic
ring.

Dancing for their women's rights among the rites of
spring;

Worshipping the gods of rain and sun, and moon
and stars,

Bicycles and bottled beer, and soap and motor cars,
Aeroplanes and telephones, and radios--and bras,
Caps and snaps, elastic straps, with nylon net and
string.

Bolstering the savage breast, and thus abolishing
Maidens' jiggle, matrons' bounce and older ladies'
swing.

**Pacific Islands Monthly; Mar. 1978, p. 26.*

Whiskers

Barefoot boy with cheek of tan,
Where the water-lilies grow,
Hears the whisperings of Pan -
And his whiskers start to grow.

In the Spring, a young man's fancy
Turns to thoughts of (you should know!)
By some bio-necromancy,
That's what makes his whiskers grow.

Anything his ardour rouses -
Perfume, pin-up, picture-show,
Miniskirts or see-through blouses -
Tends to make his whiskers grow.

With the cares of life full-laden,
Adam's body lies below,
Dreaming still of youth - and maiden;
Still, with dreams, his whiskers grow.

An Accounting For Tastes

A man is born inclined to love and hate
In equal and in opposite degrees,
Ebbing and flowing, like the tidal seas
That sink serene, to rise again in spate.

First, as an infant at his mother's breast,
Suckling love, and loving as he feeds,
Then fuming in frustration of his needs
When she retires for discipline or rest.

Next, as a man in matrimony bound
Whose underserved affection and whose rage
Fall equally, as page opposes page,
When steaks are sweet and socks cannot be found.

Lastly, until his ardours all are spent,
The elder keeps his passion and his spleen
And, as erratic fortune turns the scene,
Salutes his flag and damns his government.

Do you protest, my love, you cannot hate?
Then you are cold as death, and blind as fate;
For, though we strive to purify and please,
We love and hate in similar degrees.

Family Tree

At a confluence I stand,
With my family connections
Spreading out on either hand,
Branching off in both directions.

Here my ancestors and sires,
Men of high or lowly stations;
Peers and poachers, sots and squires,
From assorted tribes and nations.

There my heirs, a hazy band,
Faceless in a silent chorus,
To be spawned upon the land
In the time that lies before us.

Multitudes have blended genes
Into generating me;
Mine, by corresponding means,
Scatter to my progeny.

Did they breed me on demand?
Was I grafted on this oak,
Or deliberately planned
By discriminating folk?

But of this I have no doubt;
Being is to be believed;
Since our fates have worked us out,
None of us was contraceived.

The Pride Of Kilgore

My ladye's complexion was peaches and cream;
But the peaches have shrivelled, the cream has gone sour.
Her tresses were golden, her eyes were agleam;
But the blossoms of morning must fade in the hour
For my ladye, the pride of Kilgore.

My ladye's complexion was powder and paint;
In her hair there were copper, and silver, and grey.
But powders have blown, and the pigments are faint,
For the winds of corruption have whittled away
At my ladye, the pride of Kilgore.

My ladye's complexion is ashes and clay,
For the nature of earth cannot rot any more;
And little white devils have nibbled away
At the eyes of my ladye, the pride of Kilgore -
At my ladye, the pride of Kilgore.

To Corinna

(after Ovid)

In May, when sap was rising young,
Corinna's arms were soft and white.
We shared her warm, exploring tongue
And tasted intimate delight.
Aye, all was lithe and younger then;
Our arms entwined, our hands caressed
The tender but unyielding breast,
As maids have ever lain with men.

But now September rules the day.
To womanhood the maid is grown,
And rounded shoulders yield to bone
Where suns have baked the supple clay.
The tongue is sharper; and the flame
Is rarely kindled, dimly burns,
And dies as quickly as she turns -
The candle's scarcely worth the game.

Yet come, Corinna, for the days
Grow ever shorter in the Fall.
The curtained dark o'ershadows all,
And we can dream of other Mays.

Ebb And Flow

Came a girl with olive eyes
From an olive land;
And a lad with tousled hair
Took her by the hand
Over weeds and rocky shore
To the level sand -
And held her hand no more.

Came a lady, olive-eyed,
When the dusk was warm;
And a man with tousled hair
Held her in his arm
With a throbbing of the blood
In the darkling calm -
When tides were at the flood.

Came a man with grizzled hair
Lonely through the night;
And a woman, olive-eyed,
With a spirit bright
Met him, turned him roundabout,
And left him in the night -
For tides were running out.

Waltz Song

When I had tea in the nursery,
Daddy came in to say
"How is my boy this evening -
What did he do today?"
But when I began the story
Of all my adventures bold,
Mummy chipped in
With a motherly grin
"Now don't let your tea get cold."

You're my cup of tea -
Hotter and sweeter far
Than any tea in the nursery
That I took with my dear Mama.

When I had tea in the offices,
Someone came in to say
"This is the mail this evening.
Anything more today?"
But when I started checking
All that we'd bought and sold,
My typist came in
With bespectacled grin
"Now, don't let your tea get cold."

You're my cup of tea -
Stirring me through the through:
Sweeter tea than they brought to me
In the days before I met you.

Now I take tea by the fireside -
Both of us old and grey.
This is the life's long evening
For us that have had our day.
Yet still, as I stir the embers
Of a fire that's growing cold,
Again you chip in
With a wrinkling grin
"Now don't let your tea get cold."

You're my cup of tea -
Still just as warm and wet.
(But I drank my tea when it suited me,
And nobody knows it yet!)

A. Friend

Bedroom Scene

Lying alone is the maiden fair;
Perfect her rounded form;
Flax and silk are her tousled hair;
Soft is her skin, and warm.

Cast aside are the coverlets,
Gone is the counterpane.
Sleeping, she sucks her toe, and wets
Her diapers once again.

Experiment

(after Dorothy Parker)

Raise my eyes in girlish gaze;
Primly let them fall again.
If I stuck to modest ways,
Would I garner nicer men?

If I doff this scarlet gown
For a sombre heliotrope,
Would I merit more renown
As a lady? What a hope!

Advice To Girls - from a bonding agent

**When the air is still and hot
And the breezes far and few,
Don't resort to beer or pot -
Sniff a little glue.**

**When your day is sodden grey
And you're desperately blue,
Don't give in to grass or hay -
Take a spot of glue.**

**Do you find you tend to fly
Off the handle? If you do,
Why not tentatively try
Sticking it - with glue.**

**When you've throbbing in the head
And your periods are due,
Don't indulge in rum. Instead
Gum it up with glue.**

**When the weather's cold and wet
And the fellows come to woo,
Don't be rash - and don't beget -
Turn, instead, to glue.**

Lines From His Mistress, Abed

(After Dorothy Parker)

Nay, tempt me not with love, good Sir -
My love for that is gone.
'Tis solitude that I prefer,
For I am sad and wan.

You misconceive this pallid cheek,
These tears I shed untold.
I have no love for you this week -
Goddam this lousy cold!

Toujours Mlle. T.

You laughed; and all the lads around
Were captivated with the sound.
But when they left you, after tea,
You sighed and pondered, "C'est la vie!"

You sang; and when your songs were done,
The fellows vanished, one by one,
Until alone, despondently,
You murmured sadly, "C'est la vie!"

While you are young, and sweet, and fair,
Proprieties hang everywhere.
But time is short. Ecoute, chérie:
C'est toi, tu sais - c' n'est pas la vie.

To B. - But Not To M.

My cogitation's crystal-clear;
My mind, pellucid as a gem;
The music of a single sphere
Exalts me, as an M.

An inspiration every thought;
My merest phrase an apothegm.
Though I were but a maid untaught,
I still should be an M.

I am not of the common crew,
Although we all from Adam stem.
I can't identify with you
Who could not be an M.

(One issued from the brow of Zeus,
And one was born in Bethlehem ...
I could go on - but what's the use?
For you are not an M.)

You cannot critize my mien
With arguments **ad hominem**.
My intellect is rapier-keen;
My countermark, an M.

Since you are but a common boy,
You cannot match my stratagem.
I parry you at every ploy,
And you succumb, sub-M.

I wear the purple on my gown;
You, if you wish, may kiss its hem.
I am the brightest girl in town,
Ineffably an M.

I rank among the best of us,
You, sir, are merely one of them.
Your base IQ just missed the bus
While mine made me an M.

You may be now my A and O
(A passing fancy this, **pro tem.**)
But I, in **dulci jubilo**,
Shall be for aye an M.

(Yet, lonely in my stratosphere,
I add this earthly **requiem**:
Drop up and see me, Billy dear.
Your ever ardent -
M.)

Romeo

Now wherefore art thou, Romeo,
So stupid and so small?

Thou knowst no Juliet, and so
Thou lovest none at all?

Then be thou slight of frame, forsooth,
And scant of wit withal;
But Heavens above! What maid could love
Who loves no maid at all?

Self-Denial

My cousin Pat
Is getting fat.
She's letting out her skirts;
And, during Lent,
It's her intent
To give up sweet desserts.

With cakes and pies
In any guise
She's not to be enticed.
It seems to me
Her piety
Is more for Pat than Christ.

Pastorale - 1

As she rested on the hay,
Breathing sighs of sweet content,
Came a lusty young roué
On his rustic pleasures bent.
Swore that he would have his way.
Had his brutish way ... and went,
Leaving her, upon the hay,
Breathing sighs of sweet content.

Pastorale - 2

Soft he woo'd me 'neath the willow,
Held my arms, and called me "pet".
Sward my sheet and moss my pillow.
Laughing lips so lightly met ...
Ours was put a peccadillo.
I'm a little sinnerette.

Round Trip

Louise is pure as driven snow -
Yet, driven for an hour or so
And parked beneath secluding trees,
She thaws with unsuspected ease.

But when her ardour's spent, Louise
Turns cool again, and tends to freeze;
And, driving home, she seems to grow
As chilly as the driven snow.

'T'eventide

Come, Philemon, and let us go
Where ivy-mantled tellies glow,
Where coruscates the cathode spark
To glimmer in the dusky park.

Come out to where a satin screen
Entrances in the urban green,
While nymphet and the lowly newt
Relax beside its wiry root.

Let lusty lad and willing wench
Disport upon the shady bench;
At sundown, come and join us here
To watch the snows of yesteryear.

Winter Night*

Evening approaches in grey;
Bells begin tolling nearby;
Swallows are winging their way
 Into the darkening sky.
Time seems to stop in the cold;
Leaves flutter down from the trees;
Raindrops unceasing, untold,
 Fall with the mist in the breeze.

Winter night: a man is called to distant lands.
Winter night: a wife is left to wring her hands.
Winter night: a poet writes of loves unknown.
Winter night: a singing girl must sing alone.

Wind stirs the air;
Wind fills the clouds;
Wind rends the skies.
 With gloom and care
 In dismal shrouds
 The daylight dies.

Winter night: I dream of home so far away.
Winter night: I wait in sadness day by day.
How long - before beloved ones unite?
How long - from far abroad on winter night?

Sadness oppresses my mind;
 Loneliness lives in my breast.
Where can a traveller find
 Peace and contentment and rest?
Wind, with your burden of rain,
 When will your sorrowing cease?
When shall we welcome again
 Rest and contentment and peace?

* From a popular Vietnamese song, *Dêm Đông* (Kim-Minh and Nguyen-van-Thuong).

Pasiphaë, Nursing, Muses

Perhaps my stinging spell on Minos' love
Was answered by a spell he cast on me;
He matched it well enough.

Here, monstrous child
Of nuzzling muzzle, my Asterius,
Now try my other breast - no udder, this,
But all I have for nourishing our son,
His father's son.

I see his father yet,
Still flecked with foam, emerging from the sea,
So white, so noble, Aye, Poseidon,
You set his horns of such a perfect span
That I should love him, as one loves a man.

It creaked, that wooden form, but it stood firm
Outside of Gortys, under twisted oaks
That shaded from my father's splendid gaze
The supple cattle skins concealing me.
O, there was power and heat of such a kind
That no man's daughter has contained the like
Before me - no, nor since. (Those hillside goats
With which I used to romp were small delight.)

He was a cunning devil, that Athenian!
How merry Ariadne used to laugh
When Daedalus made little dolls to dance!
They, too, had wheels, though they were simple toys,
Carved for the silly pastimes of a girl
Not yet awakened to the full desires
Of woman grown.

I helped him to escape.
I wonder where he is, so far from Crete.
Has he an anvil still, whereon to beat
The mettle of his craft, or some new glue
That hardens with the heat, unlike the wax
That loosed the feathers of his soaring son?

Lie close and still, my horned little one.

Seventy Miles

Your love is over the sea, my Love -
Over the ocean grey;
While mine, my Dear, is fairly near,
But seventy miles away;

Far too much for a hand to touch,
Or a word to reach, my Heart,
For "fairly near" is away, I fear -
Seventy worlds apart.

Lines Written On 21 June

This is the solstice, this the longest day.
The sun returns - but you are still away.
No loneliness is longer in the light,
But this, thank God, will be the shortest night.

The Desecrators

The sofa, where he used to lay his head,
Is here no more;
A sullen table sentinels instead
Beside the door.
The very wall on which he liked to lean
Is torn away;
A cupboard has usurped its place, in green
And sombre grey.
They have removed the little yellow light
That lit his face
When he would come to read to me at night -
His form of grace -
And sacrificed the altar for a nook,
A godless void.
The shelf on which I used to keep his book
Has been destroyed.
The bed, the modest curtain that we drew -
These, too, I miss.
A home, with all the comforts that we knew,
Has come to this.

The Girl's Tale*

I loved him with the destiny of deserts for the rain,
The hollow sense of longing and the bitter pangs of pain.

I loved him with the tenderness of suffocating sighs,
With flushing of the temples and with aching of the thighs.

We lived a happy summer, when the sun was on the sea;
We lived the nights together, when the days were long and free,
And pulses beat in unison, and breathing came as one -

But in the fall he left me, and the summertime was done.
I shivered in the chilliness of parting from a friend.
I railed at fate implacable, that cut the bitter end.

The overtures were over to the opera of strife,
And mornings found me sickened with the burgeonings of life.
I felt him grow within me, and exulted in my joy
That deserts could be green again, and bear a sturdy boy

To kindle into breathing, and to suckle at my breast -
Yet no-one ever knew of him, and none had even guessed.
I planned that I should nourish him with all I had to give.
His cries would be a clarion, a flourishing to live;

For he would stand, and run to me, and I should brush his hair,
And none would be as wonderful, and none would be as fair.
We lived in utter loneliness, with memories and pride,
With fits of black despondency that gnawed and racked inside.

There came the nights of torment, and there came the days of pain,
With misery and nausea oppressing me again.
And then was born a shrivelled thing, with swollen, purple head:
A fist of indistinguishables, horrible, and dead.
Then blood and sweat and tears were mingled to a hell of grey.
I boiled it up in vinegar, and flushed my love away.

**Plan, London*; 30, 10, 1 (1960).

But Would You Go ... ?

But would you go to France alone,
And leave me here to mope and pine
Through winter nights and days unknown
That were to have been mine?

Would you, then, leave me here at home,
With swollen eyes and heavy heart,
While in that sultry pleasure-dome
You live a year apart

And see the gay reflected light
Of Paris in the murky Seine,
While I can merely wait, and write,
And, waiting, write again?

When shall I hear your sombre voice,
Or see again that sullen smile,
Or, in that firm embrace, rejoice
To sleep in love awhile?

Yes, should you leave me in the Fall,
Then callow, yellow jealousy
Would merge with black and bitter gall
To sodden misery.

Who knows what power - shapeless, grey -
May take you from my caring hands,
And keep you endlessly away
In distant foreign lands?

If you would go to France, my Dear,
Then I should do what I must do
To leave this life I suffer here -
For I should follow you

To Hell, if need must be, and back,
Unguided, and by fears beset,
Through corridors of endless black;
But I should find you yet

If only I could be assured
That you would keep me when I came,
And, in tomorrow's now obscured,
Would live with love aflame.

O, wait awhile, e'er you depart -
Before you sail to ends unknown.
Are you to leave me here, my Heart,
And go to France, alone?

Fashions

1. The wig's antique;
The lashes, false;
The girdles creak
In walk or waltz.
Her mincing steps
Allure the gaze -
What is a woman
Nowadays?
2. Pale lips are pert
And navel, tanned;
The miniskirt
Is butt in hand
As, gland to gland,
The silken calf
Excites, unmanned,
The baser half -
(Whether to laugh
Or not to laugh?)
3. While bodice bone
Decays in dust.
The silicone
Inflates distrust:
Padding and wire
Displace the bust -
(Whether to lust
Or not to lust?)
4. With gilded nails
And hungry teeth
She goads the males -
But, underneath,
She goads herself
To wrack and wreck -
(Whether to neck
Or not to neck?)
5. A loop that lurks;
A pill that palls
And gums the works
That life installs.
They cap the tap
And spoil the seed -
(Whether to breed
Or not to breed?)
6. And what is false,
And what is true,
And what is she
To me, or you?
Woman, as such,
Is phase on phase -
But never so much
As nowadays.

Upon Julia's Clothes

(After Herrick)

Whenas in rayon Julia goes,
Organic solvents problems pose
With liquefaction of her clothes.

The choice for her is plain enough:
To wear some wool or cotton stuff
Or handle solvents in the buff.

Beauty Is Protein-Deep

Your shapely nails, your satin skin,
Are little else but protein.

Your gleaming hair, your shining eyes
Are proteins in subtle guise.

Your beating heart, your snowy breast,
Your liver, spleen, and all the rest
Of tender body, arms and legs,
Are made of milk, and meat, and eggs.

So, when your time on earth has passed
And "Finis" marks your protoplast,
With all your virtue, faith, and sin
Must perish, too, your protein.

Song - Aractise

(A selection from "Ida Revised")

This undershirt, I'm told,
Is worn to ward off cold;
But woollen stitches
Make me itch -
The truth I thus unfold -
The naked truth behold!

All Yes, yes, yes,
The naked truth behold!

Arac. This girdle, I suppose,
Is meant to hold up hose:
It tends to slip
Around my hip -
The reason, goodness knows,
I hardly dare disclose.
So off this girdle goes.

All Yes, yes, yes,
So off this girdle goes.

Arac. This bra I wear, though chic,
Does not fit my physique:
Although it ought
To give support,
I fear it's rather weak.

All Yes, yes, yes,
It's surely much too weak.

Arac. These panties, I declare,
Are now my only pair;
For all the rest
Were starched and pressed -
And starchy underwear
Is what I can't a-bear.

All Yes, yes, yes,
There goes her underwear.

CURTAIN

Mini, Mini, Tekel Upharsin

Breasts are out, and waists are in;
Knees expose a sea of skin;
Skirt-lines high and neck-lines low
(Rudi Gernreich told us so.)

Sell the style, and tell the square
What to wear - what not to wear:
See-through, si! - but no-bra, no!
(Hayakawa told us so.)

Let the chilly people choose;
They have little left to lose.
Let the revolution go!
(Che Guevara told us so.)

Whither Away

Robust in heart and arm and lung,
Our sturdy fathers throwe
By wedding wenches plump and young
To propagate their love.

But now the fashionable norm
Promotes the lank of limb,
And ladies strive to keep in form
Cylindrically slim.

As social ladders Man ascends,
He hastens his destruction,
Selecting wives for social ends
And not for reproduction.

The human race will not be won
From foolish, fertile ape,
Till Marilyns are bred to run
And breast the winning tape.

Nurses

At some equestrian event
From Ghent to Aix (or Aix to Ghent)
Or some ill-feted Derby Day,
One Ogden Nash was heard to say
"I know two things about a horse,
And one of them is rather coarse."

I know **three** things about a nurse,
And two of them are even worse.

À La Mode

or Toeing The Empire Line

(Lines springing out of a Warner's ad. in The New Yorker, 18 October 1958, p. 111.)

Gone the days of pick and choose;
Gone the time for *laisser faire*;
We must now constrain our views
And, of course, our *derrières*.

Let us draw our cinctures in;
Hoist the bulging brassieres;
Turn our eyes from flesh and sin
And, of course, from *derrières*.

In this age of *haute couture*,
Let us talk of figures chics
Not in Anglo-Saxon pure
(*Pas devant les domestiques!*)

But, in phrases raffinées,
Hushed with modest Gallic care,
Let us now demurely say
“Girdle, dear, your *derrière*”.

But Mark Antonia Now ...

Friends, Roman matrons, country maids,
Who spurn all false and artificial aids -
Inflated rubber incunabula
And wiry inserts of the armor'd bra -
Ye women's libbers who, though fully dress'd,
Yet seek to liberate the female breast -
Reveal the bold convictions of your views!
Go bravely braless, then; and do not choose
To minimize your sex. Be ever proud
Of that which Mother Nature hath endow'd
Upon you, in the shape of womankind.

Throw back your shoulders, Ma'am! Be not inclin'd
To stoop, to clutch a package or a book.
If men are wont to ogle, let them look
Upon a torso that they may believe
Was fashion'd in the form of Mother Eve.

Then, second, if you wish the World to know
That you are truly liberated, show
That you have burn'd your bridges. All should see
That you are shap'd as you were meant to be.
Let not a sack or hempen blouse conceal
The liberation you would fain reveal;
Nor let embroidery, or panels lac'd,
Or pockets, be strategically plac'd
To camouflage the nipples. Let them stand
As rufous markers on a snowy land.

If ought there is that undulates or shakes,
Then leave it swinging free, for pity's sakes! -
Not bound in fear, nor yet constrain'd with tape,
But frank in body movement as in shape.

So let it be apparent from the start:
Beneath that bosom beats a woman's heart -
Untrammel'd by a bodice or a bib -
For Man, for Motherhood, for Women's Lib.

Whorled Support

1.

When simple creeds
supplied our needs,
in days beyond
recall,
who questioned that
the Earth was flat,
though Mother of
us all?

Now Middle-age
has set the stage,
her spread is still
to come:
supplanting bone,
five circles sewn
spin targets on
her Tum.

2.

At speeds of sound,
the World around
is girdled by
the Jet.
The Universe
is in reverse,
and shrinking faster
yet.

The spinning Spheres
are here, my Dears;
the Colophon
is come,
with five concen-
tric circles, en-
abdomening
the Tum.

3.

Though you enlist
the Alchemist,
the Surgeon or
the Sage,
you cannot set
back Time, nor yet
arrest the turning
page.

But gird the hips
for Martian trips;
no Nemesis
can come
while circles five
sustain alive
the tension on
your Tum.

The Tranquil Heart

Tranquillize my skin, you say?
Not a hope, Miss Denney!
Fifteen bucks is still, today,
Quite a pretty penny.
If it tries to take us in,
Pharmacy's a farce.
Tranquillize my blooming skin?
Tranquillize my foot!

Cornucopia

Dame Demeter, we salute
Harvests, and the fertile womb.
Deck the halls with bowls of fruit;
Fructify your living-room.
Purple plums and peaches round,
Set about the mantel-place.
Let your mantelpiece abound
With bananas' golden grace.
Waxen models are inferior -
They but whet the appetite;
Decorate your own interior -
Eat your ornaments at night.
Put a basket by the 'phone;
Tempt with apples, figs and pears.
By your fruits shall you be known,
And the little ones upstairs.

Oestrogen And Westrogen

*Oestrogen and westrogen and remedies unsung
cure the ravages of time and keep you ever young*

Do you find your bosom sags?

Do your pulses' numbers rise?

Does a pair of wrinkled bags

Grow beneath your girlish eyes?

Do you start to notice signs,

Like the feet of baby crows,

Drawing horrid little lines

On your chin and round your nose?

If, when asked such questions now,

You must sadly answer "yes",

Take a nostrum from the cows -

Try a little D.E.S.

Stem those menopausal flushes:

Stop the onward march of time

As it mercilessly rushes

Through its mortal pantomime.

Age is one of many ills,

Now a curable disease

By the swallowing of pills -

Panaceal remedies.

Gynaecology is keeping

Gerontology at bay.

Women, now that time is sleeping,

Can grow younger every day.

**Mrs. Philips' Fancies
or Private Pleasures**

(Approx. 17th Century)

Won't you buy my pretty dildoes,
Pretty ladies, won't you buy?
Plump and strong, or sleek and long;
Guaranteed to satisfy.

Here are cods of softest leather,
Slyly cut and subtly sewn;
Fashioned seamlessly together
For the lass who lives alone.

Harken, nuns, and listen, widows;
Here are friends that cannot fail.
Come again with lusty men,
Free from sorrow and travail.

Won't you buy my pretty dildoes,
Trimly straight or gently bent?
Double ends for lady friends
Bring you both sublime content.

Harken, wives of sots and sailors,
Wives of wilting age accurst;
Here are pokes you need not coax,
Up and willing from the first.

Won't you buy my pretty dildoes,
Warty fellows, willing yards.
Here are tools for fever'd fools
And the honour woman guards.

Hear, ye unrequited maidens;
Try my dildoes, smooth and slim,
Till your boy can bring you joy
On the night you marry him.

Won't you buy my pretty dildoes,
Lonely ladies, won't you buy?
Here are jacks that don't relax,
Guaranteed to satisfy.

Tribady in Arcady, or The Blushing Nymphs' Reply

A man has but a single virile reed
That stands to serve his masturbat'ry need,
Whereas we women have more divers parts
To assuage the tensions of frustrated hearts.
Though his may seem a longer, sturdier flower,
It blooms but once or twice within an hour
And then, his passion o'er, his pollen spent,
Requires a day for its replenishment.

Not so our own tumescent little yard.
Though but an inch, it rises just as hard
And, losing nought by seminal emission,
Can rise, and rise again, at our volition:
So, if the spirit urges, we can tweak
An hundred raptures in a single week.

Yet further; while a man has but one plum
To fondle 'twixt his fingers and his thumb -
A single tool, with which he can engage
To play a single role on Eros' stage -
We women thrill to thrice as much as he:
Two bosoms, and one private chastity -
A triple organ, whereon we can play
Soft hymns to Venus many times a day
(And more in any solitary night!)

Enjoy yourself, my Lady Onanite!

The Little Mermaid - or The Statute of Liberty

One of a hapless, strapless band
She rests upon a reef
Or sits-in on the sunny sand
Clad in a topless brief.

And should we say the maiden nay
If Nature's laws be just,
Or cast our eyes the other way
And overlook her bust?

Dame Nature reigns, and not unkind
Dame Justice on the beaches
Where rules are sometimes undefined,
Observed but in the breaches.

The sovereign law we all profess
Should boldly stand defending
Our equal rights to equal dress,
And drop the suit now pending.

When bashless damsel dons a leaf
And on our seashore sports it,
Let equity support her brief
If nothing else supports it.

Sapphic Ode

Sea billows topped with foam, and rolling hills
Where cherries blossom pinkly in the spring,
Reflect themselves upon the vaulted sky
As cotton clouds, like scudding, bellied sails.

The artist, keenly tuned to such delights,
Seeks, with impatient fingers, to enshrine
Their charms on canvas with his subtle oils.

Though he, or she, may also strive to paint
Still-lives of peaches and lush summer fruits,
These things are cold, unmoved, without response
To breeze or touch; their nubs and navels mark
The shrivelled flowers of a season past.

Pink cheeks of girls, and shoulders: these are warm
And soft and rounded, capable to blush
When tinged with feeling, or perchance to tan
Beneath the hot caress of summer sun.

And babies' bottoms, too, and women's breasts,
These also are most sensitive to touch -
Soft surfaces in Hera's own domain,
Closer to female hearts than any else.

Lady, if you have never held, caressed,
And felt the warmth and kindness of a breast -
Another woman's, not to say your own -
Then you are less than man, and less, maybe,
Than any living, loving, human she.

Whenas For Love

(Madrigal)

Whenas for love fayre Lesbia sighs,
Her girlish fancie turns from swains.
She seeks delyte in other guise
And Lesbia yet a mayde remayns.

Whenas in love sweet Lesbia swounds,
Her flushèd bosom pounding hard;
Her mayden urges know no bounds
Save that she has no need of yard.

Whenas for love bold Lesbia cries,
Her ladye's fingers, feeling fast,
Discover love betwene her thies --
A torment first, a blyss at last.

Whenas, expir'd, faint Lesbia rests
With ladye love - a pretty twain,
Their arms entwin', with breasts on breasts,
Their pashions soon to rise again.

Then, noble swains, go rest your yards
Or synk them in some other sods.
As Eros sleeps among the swards,
Seek we delytes of other gods.

**Cf. Bodleian Ms.*

*"Go, synk y'r yards in other sods,
While Lesbia's love reposes.
In bushye gardens, other gods
Are plucking wilder roses."*

Cos' Fan' Tutte

Some girls enjoy a woolly toy,
A teddy-bear, or teddy-boy.
They rub against its head or feet,
Or tuck it underneath their seat
And press it with their thighs and hips.
Some simply stroke their finger-tips
Along the middle and down the sides -
While others go for pony rides.
Some use a carrot or a plum,
A soapy finger or a thumb,
A plastic bottle or a ball.
Some hardly feel the urge at all,
While nuns, and women of that kind,
Content themselves with sleight of mind;
And, for the record - now and then -
Some do it (so I'm told) with men.

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by *Ralph A. Lewin and A. Friend*

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About the Author . . .

Ralph Lewin was educated in England, though he now lives in America and teaches biology at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. He has published a couple of poems in *The New Yorker*, for which he was paid, and a number of others elsewhere, for which he was not. (Free verse, so to speak.) He writes scientific papers based at least partly on his own research—on various aspects of experimental phycology—and has edited a couple of books in the field.

He plans to publish four more volumes of verse, since he considers that there is virtually nobody else writing decent poetry these days. (His optimism surpasses even his modesty.—Ed.)

THIS IS THE SECOND volume of the series, and the author contends that it is a serious work, not to be taken too lightly, and that it contains a great deal of very sound biology, much of it based on his own research, naturally with the help of others, in the field. (The field means the subject matter, not necessarily the actual site of the investigations.—Ed.)



Ralph A. Lewin